

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1 – 21 (cancelled)

Claim 22 (withdrawn)

Claim 23 (cancelled)

Claim 24 (withdrawn)

Claim 25 (cancelled)

Claim 26 (withdrawn)

Claims 27 – 28 (cancelled)

29. (currently amended) An angled gripping joint combination for support structures, comprising:

(a) a ~~U-beam~~ top joint, comprising:

(i) a first side U-beam beam ~~having a first surface;~~

(ii) a second side bracket beam; and

(iii) a pair of spaced inward facing lumber leg support surfaces joining the first side U-beam beam and second side bracket beam together, each inward facing lumber leg support surface dimensioned to accept a lumber leg between the support surface, the first side U-beam beam and the second side bracket beam and ~~positioned at a predetermined angle with respect to the first surface;~~ and

(b) a ~~U-beam~~ splay bar, comprising:

(i) a pair of opposed outward facing lumber leg guiding surfaces; and

(ii) a connecting member extending longitudinally between the lumber leg guiding surfaces and connecting them together, ~~the outwardly facing lumber leg guiding surfaces positioned at the pre-determined angle with respect to the longitudinal axis of the connecting member; and~~

(iii) a pair of spaced opposed flanks extending outwardly from each guiding surface in parallel alignment dimensioned to accept a lumber leg between each pair of spaced opposing flanks;

wherein a pair of lumber legs may be positioned between respective inward facing lumber leg support surfaces and between the first side U-beam beam and second side bracket beam of the ~~U-beam~~ top joint and adjacent the outward facing lumber leg

guiding surfaces and between each respective pair of flanks of the ~~U-beam~~ splay bar so that first ends of the lumber legs adjacent the ~~U-beam~~ top joint are forced toward each other when the ~~U-beam~~ splay bar is moved in the direction of the ~~U-beam~~ top joint to force the lumber legs to pivot about the inward facing lumber leg support surfaces.

30. (currently amended) The combination of Claim 29 wherein side enclosing brackets are affixed to the second side beam ~~U-beam~~ of the ~~U-beam~~ top joint.
31. (currently amended) The combination of Claim 29 wherein side enclosing brackets are affixed to a side of the ~~U-beam~~ splay bar.
32. (currently amended) The combination of Claim 29 wherein side enclosing brackets are affixed to the a second side beam ~~U-beam~~ of the ~~U-beam~~ top joint and side enclosing brackets are affixed to a side of the ~~U-beam~~ splay bar.
33. (cancelled)
34. (currently amended) The combination of Claim 29 ~~33~~ wherein each flank extends in a perpendicular direction with respect to the outward facing lumber leg guiding surface.
35. (currently amended) The combination of Claim 29 ~~33~~ in which the flanks include holes through which a nail may be inserted into a lumber leg.
36. (cancelled)
37. (currently amended) The combination of Claim 29 wherein the ~~U-beam~~ top joint further comprises an axial slot dimensioned to accept a lumber member therein to extend axially in the direction of the longitudinal axis of the first side beam ~~side U-beam~~.
38. (currently amended) The combination of Claim 37 wherein the axial slot is positioned on the second side bracket beam.
39. (currently amended) The combination of Claim 37 wherein the axial slot is positioned on the first side beam ~~side U-beam~~.
40. (currently amended) The combination of Claim 29 wherein the ~~U-beam~~ splay bar further comprises an axial slot dimensioned to accept a lumber member therein to extend axially in the direction of the longitudinal axis of the ~~U-beam~~ splay bar.
41. (new) The combination of Claim 29 wherein the first side beam comprises a first surface with the lumber leg support surfaces positioned at a predetermined angle with respect to the first surface and wherein the outwardly facing lumber leg guiding surfaces of the splay bar are positioned at the pre-determined angle with respect to the longitudinal axis of the connecting member.